

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

*10-16-2002*

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instruction. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name: The Aquitania

other names/site number:

**2. Location**

street and number: 5000 Marine Drive

N/A not for publication

city or town: Chicago

N/A vicinity

state: Illinois

county: Cook County code: 031

zip code: 60640

**3. State/Federal/Tribal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*William L. White / SHP*  
Signature of certifying official/Title

*1-14-02*  
Date

**Illinois Historic Preservation Agency**  
State or Federal agency or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency or Tribal Government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
	0	sites
	0	structures
	0	objects
	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic

**Historic Subfunctions**

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

Multiple Dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic

**Current Subfunctions**

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

Multiple Dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Moderne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	Concrete
Walls	Brick
	Limestone
Roof	Asphalt
Other	Terra Cotta

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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### 8. Statement of Significance

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#### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

#### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

#### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development  
Architecture

#### Period of Significance

1923-1941

#### Significant Dates

1941

1923

#### Significant Person

(Complete if criterion B is marked above)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Harris, Ralph C.

Jillson, Byron H.

The Applicant

Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois

County and State

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

#### Previous documentation on file (NPS:)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

See continuation sheet for additional HABS/HAER documentation.

#### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- 
- 
- 
- Other (Repository Name: Office of the building)

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## 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property:** 0.90

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Zone 16, East 446030, North, 4646830

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The Aquitana  
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title: Susan S. Benjamin  
organization: Historic Certification Consultants  
street & number: 711 Marion Avenue  
city or town: Highland Park state: Illinois  
date: 8/8/2001  
telephone: (847) 432-1865  
zip code: 60035-

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

#### Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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### Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name: 5000 Marine Drive Corporation (c/o JoAnne Hoskins)  
street & number: 5000 Marine Drive  
city or town: Chicago state: Illinois  
telephone: (773) 561-2928  
zip code: 60640-

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Program Center, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington DC 20240; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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### SUMMARY

The Aquitania is located at 5000 Marine Drive, on the northwest corner of Marine Drive and Argyle Street. It is an 82-unit, fifteen-story courtyard apartment building designed in the Classical Revival style in 1923 by architects Ralph C. Harris and Byron H. Jillson. Its exterior is red brick with limestone and terra cotta trim. Although the Aquitania has entrances on both Argyle Street, which runs east-west, and on Marine Drive, which runs north-south paralleling Lake Shore Drive, the building faces east toward Lincoln Park and Lake Michigan. When the building was designed, Lake Michigan was directly across a narrow road and Lincoln Park had not as yet been extended as far north as Argyle. In 1941, a small vestibule opening onto a porte-cochere on the east side of the building was removed, and the section of the building enclosing a foyer was remodeled in a simplified Classical Revival style by architect Louis R. Solomon. The pared-down design of the change reflects the period in which the remodeling took place and stylistically complements the building's original Classical Revival design. At the same time that this entrance was altered, the ground-floor interior public spaces were redesigned in the Art Moderne style by the Chicago decorating firm of Smith & Herman. Both the exterior, dating from 1923, and all of the first floor public spaces, dating from 1941, have excellent integrity, even retaining 1941 decorative murals and Art Moderne light fixtures. Hazardous condition necessitated the removal of a terra cotta parapet with a balustrade supporting urns that were located at the roofline and terra cotta balustrades on balconettes at the upper floors. Old photos indicate the balustrade and urns were gone by c. 1950; the balconette balustrades were removed c. 1980. Aside from these changes, the exterior as well as the elegant Art Moderne interior remains intact and has not been altered since 1941. The upstairs apartments contain between one and three bedrooms. Hall configurations and most of the room layouts of the original apartments are unchanged. Several interior spaces have their original paneled wall treatment. Designed as a "better class" apartment building, the Aquitania continues to reflect its luxury appeal.

### LOCATION AND SETTING

The Aquitania is located in Chicago, Cook County, on the east side of the community area of Uptown, with Edgewater to the north, Lincoln Square to the west and Lake View to the south. Uptown is approximately five miles north of Chicago's business district. The borders of Uptown are formed by Foster on the North, Irving Park Road on the south, Lake Michigan on the east and Ravenswood down to Montrose and East to Clark Street on the west. Metra (historically the Chicago & North Western Railway) tracks parallel Ravenswood. Sheridan Road, a major north-south artery, is the next street west from Marine Drive. Lake Shore Drive is approximately .1 mile to the east, running through Lincoln Park, and Lake Michigan is .3 miles to the east.

Originally part of the city of Lake View, Uptown was annexed to Chicago along with Lake View in 1889. In the late 1850s, when the township of Lake View was organized, the area was largely swamp and marsh. The years

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between 1870-1890 showed substantial growth, with most residents, who were predominantly German, living in modest frame cottages; there were some more elaborate residences belonging to wealthier Chicagoans.

The years between 1890 and 1920 marked a time of substantial growth. Swedish immigrants outnumbered Germans, and Italians. Poles and Russian Jews began to move to Uptown. The population surge was largely the result of transportation improvements, including a new transit line on Lawrence Avenue, the extension of streetcar lines along Broadway and Clark Streets and the extension of the north elevated line, in 1900, to Wilson Avenue. Beaches were developed at Wilson and Clarendon Avenues, and this was a draw. By the time the Aquitania was completed, in 1923, the elevated continued north through Edgewater, and Sheridan Road was a well-traveled thoroughfare lined by elegant homes where it wended its way north through Edgewater. Because of the rapid increase in land values, large architecturally noteworthy homes were being built on east-west streets such as Castlewood Terrace and Hutchinson Street. This increase also promoted the construction of multiple-unit apartment buildings like the Aquitania, apartment hotels and hotels. The area became a very desirable location.<sup>1</sup> In the 1910s and 1920s, Uptown became known as a popular entertainment district, the home of Essanay Studios, founded in 1907, the Riviera Theater (1917), the Uptown Theater (1924), and the Aragon Ballroom (1926). George K. Spoor, who located Essanay Studios at 1333 West Argyle, was the developer of the Aquitania; he lived down the street in a house at 908 Argyle (demolished).

At the time the Aquitania was built, there were few tall buildings along Lake Michigan in the Uptown-Edgewater area. To the north stood the Admiral, in the 5200 block, at the southwest corner of the lake and Foster Avenue (1921) and the Edgewater Beach Hotel, in the 5300 block of Sheridan Road, between Sheridan Road and the lake (1915, demolished). Today the immediate neighborhood is largely made up of apartment buildings, most built since 1939, some six flats, some mid rises and some high rises. To the west of the Aquitania is an alley, an open lot and an eight-story apartment building; To the north is a three-story parking garage, with a modern high rise beyond.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

### EXTERIOR

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<sup>1</sup>Evelyn M. Kitegawa and Karl E. Taeber, Editors. *Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area*, Chicago: Chicago Community Inventory, University of Chicago, Philip M. Hauser, Director, 1963. p. 20.

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The Aquitania is a 15-story courtyard apartment building featuring a generally U-shaped ground plan with two wings flanking a courtyard facing east toward Lake Michigan. Because the western edge of the lake runs Northwest/Southeast, the lot where the structure was built had a diagonal boundary edge on the east side, and the Aquitania was constructed so that the south wing of the "U" is longer than the north wing, following the line of the lot frontage. The lot is an irregularly-shaped parallelogram, measuring 157' along Marine Drive, 164' along Argyle Street, 152' along the west edge and 125' on the north edge.<sup>2</sup> The overall dimensions of the building are 135' x 108'. The two projecting wings that face east are 41' wide separated by the interior courtyard that is 53' wide. Projecting from the interior wall of the court is a section housing the foyer; it measures 26' x 16'. The south elevation, facing Argyle Street, is 108' wide. The west (rear) elevation is 124' wide. On this side of the building, there are two shallow wings, each 29' wide separated by a recessed area that is 66' wide; the recess is 7' deep. The north elevation, which faces the parking garage, has two sections. The east section of that elevation is 31' wide; the west section, which is 57' wide, is set 11' back from the east section. On the east, the building is set back 25' from the lot line; on the south the setback is 15'. The building rises to a height of 157'.<sup>3</sup>

The Aquitania exemplifies the three-part vertical block described by architectural historian Richard Longstreth.<sup>4</sup> This type of structure began appearing in the 1890s and remained popular into the late 1920s. It is characterized by its division into three distinct zones, analogous to the divisions of a classical column: the base, the shaft and the capital. On the primary east and south facades of the Aquitania, the first three floors (the ground, first and second floors) that form the base are dressed limestone, with a limestone cornice at the top of the second floor. The next nine floors are predominantly red brick and separated from the uppermost section by projecting cornices connected by a stone string course. The top three floors are predominantly sheathed in stone, with brick and terra cotta trim.

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<sup>2</sup>The dimensions of the lot are taken from the Certificate of Survey by A.I. Silander, who had offices at 1812 Prairie Avenue, Chicago. The survey was drawn up December 8, 1934.

<sup>3</sup>Except for the dimensions of the exterior lobby remodeling that took place in 1941, the dimensions for the building were taken from mylars of the original blueprints. "Apartments for Mr. George K. Spoor", Ralph C. Harris and Byron H. Jillson, Architects. 190 N. State Street, Chicago, Ill., 10/20/22.

<sup>4</sup>Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*. Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, The Preservation Press, 1987. p. 93.



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The style of the exterior of the Aquitania is Classical Revival, a style often applied to commercial and multi-family buildings during the years between the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and 1930. In the Aquitania, classical detailing includes pilasters that have molded bases and Doric and Ionic capitals connecting the second and third floors, geometric panels with Roman details such as swags and urns, dentilled cornices topping ornamental entablatures at the top of the third and fifteenth stories and pediments topping the 14<sup>th</sup> floor windows.

The primary facades of the Aquitania face east toward Lincoln Park and the lake and south toward Argyle Street. Each has a public entrance. The entrance on Marine Drive is located in the center of the foyer that was remodeled in 1941. The Argyle Street public entrance is set under a long metal canopy that extends from the building to the sidewalk. It replaced a small rounded metal canopy that was removed in 1941 when a semicircular drive leading to the Argyle Street entrance was taken out.

The entire building has flat walls except for the two bays of bowed windows at the end of each east-facing bay. The detailing of the primary east and south facades is very similar. They are red brick trimmed with limestone and terra. Almost all of the openings have wood 6/1 double-hung windows on the primary facades. The building also contains some 4/1 windows, some 8-light casements and some 2/2 windows with horizontal muntins.

The three story base of the primary facades of the Aquitania is faced with rectangular blocks of dressed limestone. It is topped by a broad slightly projecting stone band and punctuated at the ground level with rectangular openings that are 4'6" tall and 3' wide. These openings, at the ground level either contain a pair of 8-light casements or 6/1 double hung windows. Most of them are covered on the outside by twisted wrought iron grillwork intersecting on the diagonal to form a diamond pattern.<sup>5</sup> The first and second floor window openings are separated by pairs of pilasters. Some are fluted and some are dressed. Those that are fluted are topped by Ionic capitals; those that are dressed are topped by Doric capitals. On the first floor, all pairs of windows and the bays of bowed windows have shallow curved wrought iron balconettes with ornamental vertical members topped by a railing with small wrought iron urns on the ends. Between the first and second floor windows there are carved stone panels, edged by incised ovals with small rosettes at the corners, containing swags of fruit or urns and ribbon folds. The second floor of windows is topped by the molded stone entablature, topped by a dentilled projecting cornice. There is a rosette set in the entablature above each pilaster. This cornice extends from the southwest corner of the building around the primary facades to the northeast corner of the building and caps the base of the building.

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<sup>5</sup>The ground level of this building is the entrance level and corresponds to the first floor on most buildings. The fourteen floors, numbered 1-15 (skipping 13) begin above the ground entrance level.

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The center section of the primary facades of the building, the nine floors forming the classical "shaft", is brick. The wall treatment of the third floor, which serves as a transition between the building's base and shaft section, combines brick and stone. The windows are grouped in pairs and framed in stone except on the east wing facades where three window openings framed in stone are set in a bowed bay. All of the window groupings are topped by a shallow molded stone cornice. A wide flat stone string course connects the windows at the sill line and at the tops of the windows just below the level of the lintels. Rectangular brick panels are created by the stone window framing and the string courses. A row of headers and a narrow stone band surrounds the brick in each panel. There are rosettes centered above the windows openings. Floors 4-14 in the center section have a string course of brick soldiers forming the window lintels and connecting them. The windows have stone sills.

The top section of the primary facades of the building, three floors forming the classical "capital", is largely made up of stone, with stone framing the windows. Directly beneath the sill line of the 12<sup>th</sup> floor windows there were shallow stone balconettes supported by large fluted terra cotta brackets that originally supported terra cotta balustrades. These balustrades, which were in deteriorated condition, were removed in 1980. There are two stone string courses connecting the windows—a double band at the levels of the base of the balconies and a single band just above the sill line. These string courses extend from the northeast to the southwest corner of the building and wrap around the corners. Under the 13<sup>th</sup>-floor windows, there are ornamental terra cotta panels containing a rosette in the center flanked by a wave-like pattern. Where windows on this floor are grouped in twos or threes, each group is topped by a fluted terra cotta band and a molded stone cornice topped by terra cotta swan's neck broken pediment or triangular pediment that is flanked by terra cotta urns in half relief against the wall. Stone pilasters frame the window groupings on the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> floors. These pilasters have stylized Ionic capitals and rest on molded bases. Between each window grouping, the stone banding forms tall narrow brick panels. Each panel contains terra cotta ornament in the form of an elongated octagon with swags at the side. This ornament rests flat against the wall between the windows and is set at the corner so that half is seen on each face of the building. The four-part terra cotta cornice at the top of the building has a band at the bottom with fluting, then a second band with rosettes located at the top of the window groupings or over the brick panels, depending on the facade. Above this second band is a row of large dentils topped by a deep molded terra cotta overhang.

On the east facade of this large U-shaped building, the walls of the two wings are identical. Each contains two bow-shaped bays of three window openings running up the entire height of the building. At the ground level the two bow-shaped bays contain three window openings, each has a pair of the casement windows and each is covered with wrought iron grillwork. Ornamental wrought iron lanterns flank these two bays. Above the wide stone band topping the ground floor of the primary facades of the building there are two floors of 6/1 windows that are treated differently. On the first floor, the bays have wrought iron balustrades like those on the pairs of windows located on the other primary facades. Between the first and second floors there are six carved stone rectangular panels set in groups of three. Each of these panels contains a carved stone swag of fruit with ribbon

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folds. The center panel is wider and has a large rosette in the center over the swag. Pairs of dressed stone square Doric pilasters frame the corners, separate the bays and support a stone entablature. The rosettes in the entablature over the second floor windows are located over the pilasters and the stone mullions dividing the three windows in each bay. The transitional floor and the brick upper floors of the wing facades are detailed like the other facades of the building. The top three floors generally repeat the brick, stone and terra cotta detailing found on the rest of the building except that swan's neck broken pediments top the thirteenth floor window groupings; triangular pediments top the thirteenth floor windows on the rest of the building.

The detailing in the sections of the courtyard facing north and south generally follows the design of the other primary facades of the building. On the section of the court facing north, the ground floor is faced by large blocks of stone that are punctuated by three bays of the rectangular openings covered by wrought iron grillwork in a diamond pattern. The two bays to the east contain pairs of eight-pane casements; the single window at the west end of the wall is a 6/1. There are four bays of windows on floor 1-14. Floors one and two, sheathed in stone, have two Doric columns at the corners and single fluted Ionic columns separating the bays. On the first floor the pairs of windows have balconettes with shallow curved wrought iron balustrades. The east two bays contain a pair of windows, the third bay contains a single window and the fourth contains a pair. All of the windows are 6/1s. There are rectangular stone panels between the bays. The panels under the pairs of windows contain a long single swag with ribbon folds; those under the single windows contain an urn. The single windows on floors 3-14 have 6/1 windows in the second and fourth bay to the east. On the section of the court facing south, there are four bays of the rectangular openings on the ground floor. A single pair of eight-light casements are located in the west bay. There are no openings in the next bay to the east. In the east bay there are two pairs of eight-light casements. All these window openings are set behind wrought iron grillwork in a diamond pattern. On floors 1-14 there are four bays of windows. The west window is a 4/1; the next bay contains a pair of 6/1s, the next a single 4/1 and the east bay a pair of 6/1s. On floors 3-14, the single windows are 4/1s. The balconettes, ornamental stone panels and decorative terra cotta treatments are the same as those on the section of the courtyard facing north.

The center section of the courtyard, that faces east, is four bays wide from the first through the 14<sup>th</sup> floor. Each bay contains a pair of 6/1 double-hung windows. On the second floor the ornamental panels contain a single long swag, just like those under the other pairs of windows on the building. The rest of the detailing on this section of the building repeats that on the other facades. On the ground floor, there is the projecting 26' x 16' foyer, with the long side facing Marine Drive. There are two bands of three double hung windows facing east flanking the entrance foyer. Each window is a 2/2 with a horizontal muntin bar on the top and on the bottom.

The entrance foyer was remodeled in 1941 by Louis Solomon. Prior to that time this part of the building was connected to a small vestibule, which was in turn connected to a porte-cochere with a drive running through it. The porte-cochere had pairs of cylindrical Doric columns set on the diagonal at the corners. In the redesign of

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the entrance lobby, a symmetrical stripped down classicism was employed. The dressed stone structure has a slightly inset portico across the front with four square Doric columns. The distance between the two in the center is wider than that between each center column and that at the corner. The center columns frame the entrance. These columns support a simple entablature with a circular stone disc, reminiscent of the more elaborate rosettes on the 1923 building, over each column. The entablature has a string course surrounding the structure and porch and is topped by a slender molded projecting cornice. Inside the portico, against the east wall, there are pilasters echoing the columns supporting the portico roof. The tall rectangular entrance has molded stone trim surrounding a pair of steel double doors with Art Moderne hardware. The entrance doors are topped by a stone panel containing the address number, "5000". The north and south walls of the lobby have two 1923 7/6 double-hung arched windows. These upper sash of these windows each has an arched glazed opening in the center with six lights radiating out from it.

A simplified classical approach governs the landscape treatment of the east facade, with elements laid out symmetrically. At the east edge of the portico, stone balustrades extend north and south to the building. In the small garden framed by the north balustrade, the porch and the north and east-facing walls of the building there is a small 8-sided fountain surrounded by ground cover and flagstones. The garden on the other side of the portico has low shrubs and flagstones. There are two stone planters set between the outer columns. Beyond the columns is a shallow rectangular concrete terrace with planted urns in front of the inner columns. Low boxed shrubs extend out from the north and south edges of the balustrade and around the base of the east and south facades of the building. A concrete walk, perpendicular to the portico, extends east to the public sidewalk.

The south facade is the other primary facade of the Aquitania. Facing Argyle Street, it is nine bays wide. On the ground floor, where the wall is faced in dressed limestone, there are two entrances. A primary entrance, opening into a vestibule, is located in the fourth bay from the west. This entrance contains a set of steel double doors with Art Moderne hardware. There is a wrought iron canopy with ornamental wrought iron supports that extends over a concrete walk from the entrance doors to the public sidewalk. It is topped by a shallow gabled roof that has a ceiling and lights and is topped by a glass roof. This canopy extends over a concrete walk from the entrance doors to the public sidewalk. The secondary entrance is located in the sixth bay from the west. It has a steel door and opens into a service area. The seven bays of windows contain a mix of pairs of casements and double hung windows. There is one bay between the public entrance and the service entrance. The window in the bay just to the east of the canopy contains a pair of casements; the other opening is covered by a steel panel. In the three bays to the east of the service entrance, there is a pair of 6/1s, a single 6/1 and a two openings that have a pair of casements. All of the window openings that punctuate the wall east of the public entrance are covered with wrought iron grillwork in a diamond pattern. To the west of the public entrance there are three bays. The two windows in the first bay to the west each contain a pair of casements and are not covered by grillwork. The second bay to the west contains a single opening containing a pair of casements and is covered by the grillwork. The two windows in the bay at the west end of the facade contains a pair of 6/1s, also not covered by the

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grillwork. Above the first floor, the nine bays contain pairs of 6/1 windows alternating with single 6/1 windows. The two end bays contain a pair of window openings. Over the two entrances, the bays have a single window. Where there are two windows, the carved stone panels between the first and second floors contains a wide stone swag; where there is a single window, the panel contains an urn. The design of the Argyle Street facade follows the classical base, shaft, classical sequence found on the east facades of the building, and the detailing repeats.

The secondary facades face west and north. These elevations do not follow the classical sequence. Most of the wall surface on these facades is red brick.

On the west facade, the building is in two sections. In the section to the south, the walls follow the shape of a shallow "U". The ground floor has thirteen bays made up of window and door openings. The window at the south end of the west facade, closest to Argyle Street, is covered by a steel panel. Immediately north of it is a steel entrance door. The third bay to the north contains a 6/1 window. The fourth is covered by a steel panel. The fifth and sixth bays from the south have their original 6/1 windows. The seventh bay contains a wide steel entrance door, the eighth a large opening with steel two paneled steel openings, the ninth a steel entrance door. Bays 10-13 have openings covered by steel panels. The first floor has ten bays. There are two 6/1 windows at the south end and two at the north end, where the wall walls project out forming shallow wings. The third and fourth bays from the south each contain a single narrow 4/1 window and the fifth a pair of 6/1s. The sixth bay contains a single 2/2 window with a center muntin and a paneled door with a window that has two panes of glass at the top. Next to this door, in the seventh bay, is a second opening, which contains a steel fire door. The eighth bay, the last in the center section of the building, contains a 4/1 window. Floors 2-14 in the west facade have an identical window configuration, with eleven bays. The south two end bays, in the slightly projecting wing, each have a 6/1 window. The third and fourth bays contain two small narrow 4/1 windows, the fifth a pair of 4/1s and the sixth a single 2/2 window and an adjacent paneled door with a window that has two vertical panes of glass at the top. The sixth bay is a mirror image of the fifth, containing a similar door and window. The seventh bay has a pair of 6/1s and the eighth and ninth two small narrow 4/1s. The tenth and eleventh bay, in the slightly projecting north wing, contain 6/1s like the first and second bay in the slightly projecting wing at the south end of the facade. A fire escape runs up the entire height of the building, servicing the doors in the sixth and seventh bays. Where the building notches in, there is a single bay of 6/1 windows. These run between floors 1-14 in the south wing and face north; they run between floors 2-14 in the north wing and face south. In the section to the north, which is 11' wide, there is another bay of windows facing west. This section is set back 57' behind the northwest corner of the larger "U"-shaped section. On the ground floor there is a 6/1 window and a 4/1 window. Above this floor the bay contains a pair of 6/1 windows.

The walls on the ground floor of this facade are of buff colored brick as are the first two and half of the third floor in the shallow projecting wings. This brick serves as a compatible transition from the stone treatment on the southwest corner, which continues the detailing on the primary facades. There is a two-story square corner

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Doric pilaster flanked by flat Doric pilasters extending up through floors one and two at the corner of the building. These pilasters support the entablature and cornice that extend around the corner. At the third floor, a wide brick string course of soldiers with a row of headers at the top and bottom continues the line of the stone moldings at the bottom of the entablature. A second string course continues the stone band at the top of the third floor windows. This detailing is mirrored on the third floor of the north wing. The rest of the facade is red brick except there is a buff-colored brick parapet wall surrounding the top of the two wings. A 3' diameter stack runs up the building between the last bay to the north and the northwest corner of the south section of the building.

On the north facade, the wall is "L" shaped. It is 31' wide at the east end and 57' wide at the west end. On the first three floors, at the east end of the building where it butts up against the parking garage, there are no openings facing north. Above the parking garage, a consistent pattern is followed. There are no openings in the east 31'. A soldier course at the lintel line of the windows, however, extends along this section of the north facade. The wall then notches in one bay, which contains a pair of 6/1 windows. There are generally five bays in the west 57' of the north walls. The ground floor has five bays. The first bay to the west consists of a pair of 2/2 steel windows, the second a 6/1, the third a 4/1, the fourth a 6/1 and the fifth a steel entrance door. The first floor has two bays. There is a pair of 6/1 windows at the west end. At the east end there is a paneled door with four lights and an adjacent 6/1 window. Floors 2-14 have five bays. The bay at the west end has a pair of 6/1s as does the second bay. The third has a steel fire door and the fourth a 6/1 windows. The fifth has a paneled door with four lights and an adjacent 6/1 window. A fire escape runs up the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> bays and the half of the fifth containing a door. The fire escape extends between floors 1-14.

The walls are all of red brick on the north facade except at the northeast corner and at the roofline. On the second floor the stone facing on the east facade continues around the corner. On the third floor the stone banding extends around the corner. The continuation of detailing also occurs on the twelfth floor and at the lintel line of the top floor. Between these two rows of banding, a terra cotta emblem similar to those between the bays on the rest of the building is set at the corner. At the top of the building the projecting dentilled cornice continues to where the banding stops. Beyond that is a buff-colored brick parapet wall that continues around the corner of the west facade.

## INTERIOR

There are two public entrances and three service entrances to the ground floor interior. One is located on the east side of the building, facing Marine Drive. This is a formal entrance, but not used as frequently as the second public entrance. The second entrance is off Argyle Street and reached from the walk located under the canopy that extends to the public sidewalk. The ground floor has nine public areas made up of the foyer, the lobby, the

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vestibule, the south hallway, the south sitting area, the north sitting area, the north hallway and the manager's lobby. There are also service spaces including a north and south passenger and two freight elevators, laundry rooms, storage rooms, offices, a boiler room and a custodian's apartment at the south end of the west side of the building. There are three sets of staircases in addition to the fire escapes.

The public spaces were originally designed in the Classical Revival style to compliment the design of the exterior. The building was published in the December, 1924, issue of *Western Architect*, and the lobby and typical apartment interiors were illustrated as well as details of the exterior, a typical floor plan and a rendering drawn from the southeast corner. The photos of the two-story lobby show a deep cornice with an acanthus frieze, Corinthian pilasters in the corners, glass paneled doors set in tall arched entrances and a wrought iron fixture and sconces.<sup>6</sup> When the first floor public interiors were modernized in 1941, this lobby and the other spaces were transform, updated, but in a manner that was elegantly designed and reflective of the Art Moderne style that was popular during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The foyer, opening off the center door facing Marine Drive is a very simple rectangular room. Since the double hung 7/6 windows were retained on each side of the space, a small semblance of the building's classical architecture remains on the interior. Changes, however, are evident in the room's rounded corners, simplified geometric crown moldings, low chair rail and in the sconces, which are made up of playful abstracted leaves springing from a semicircular stemmed fixture. The lobby is the most decorative space. It has fluted walls, earth-toned murals in the rounded northwest and southwest corners, steel and bronze heating grills in a geometric pattern and rounded corner door moldings. Cove moldings contain indirect lighting, enhanced by a large round frosted glass fixture with tinted glass laid out in a radiating pattern. Wall sconces are more elaborate than those in the entrance lobby. They have a stylized acanthus design with leaves flowing out of the acanthus pod. The design of the murals portrays large stylized leaves in blue-grey and white on a warm brown background. The leaves pick up the curving leaf pattern of the sconces. The specifications indicate that the walls were to be covered with flexwood veneer of silver grey aspen and plaster, and that a polished plate glass mirror was to be provided. The other first floor public rooms—the south Argyle Street vestibule, the south elevator lobby, the hall connecting the south elevator lobby to the south vestibule, the south and north sitting areas flanking the foyer, the north elevator lobby and the manager's lobby—all have simple narrow wood door casings, low wainscot, rounded corner walls, and ceilings with flat double coves. There are square frosted glass ornamental ceiling fixtures and sconces in these small spaces. The Art Moderne styling carries through all the public spaces on the first floor of the building.

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<sup>6</sup>“The Aquitania Hotel, Chicago”, *Western Architect*. Vol XXXIII, December, 1924, Plates 9-12.

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The first floor contains three apartments on the south side of the building and one on the north, laundry rooms, a conference room, laundry and storage areas. The center section of the front of the building forms the second store of the foyer. The apartment in the southeast corner contains three bedrooms (an A Unit); the one in the northeast corner contains two (an F Unit), and the other two, which are located at the rear in the northwest corner (a B Unit) and at the front to the south (a C Unit), contain one bedroom.

The upper floors of the building contain 6 lines of apartment units, lettered A through F. The A Units, which are in the south wing of the building, have a living room and dining room facing Lincoln Park; each room has a bow window. They are accessed from a long reception hall with an entrance to a small hall that opens into two bedrooms and a bath. There is also an entrance off the reception hall to a service hall that opens into the kitchen, butler's pantry and a maid's room. Apartment line A shares a stair hall and freight elevator with the B Units. The B line is located in the southwest corner of the building. A doorway opens into a long reception hall, which accesses the living room and bedroom. The living room, its dining room to the east and a small kitchen all face Argyle Street. The C and D Units both are one-bedroom units and have living rooms and dining rooms that face Lincoln Park from inside the U of the courtyard. The C Units each have a large reception hall that opens into the living room. The A, B and C Units are accessed from the south public elevator. The D Unit contains a small reception hall that opens into the living room, which is right next to the dining room. Units C and D share a rear hall with a freight elevator and both open into the west fire escape. Unit E is in the northwest corner of the building. It has a small reception hall that opens into a bedroom and living room. The living room has a dining room and a kitchenette to the east. Unit F is in the shorter north wing of the building. Both the living room and a bedroom face east toward the park through bow windows. Entrance into this two bedroom unit is through a narrow hall into a reception hall. The two bedrooms are to the south of this hall. The dining room also opens off the hall. The kitchen of this unit and Unit E share a freight elevator and entrances to the north fire escape.

The interiors of the apartments that have not been altered over the years have wood wainscot and wood trim forming wall panels. The apartments have oak strip flooring. Some units have been modernized, including remodeled kitchens, but many are quite intact with original trim and room configurations. Only two apartment units in the building have been combined--a D and E Unit--on the fourth floor.

The Aquitania remains in fine condition and has excellent integrity, continuing to exemplify a better class apartment building. Commanding superb views of Lincoln Park and Lake Michigan, it elegantly combines the Classical Revival style popular after the World's Columbian Exposition with the fashionable Art Moderne style of the late 1930s and early 1940s.



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**SUMMARY**

The Aquitania, located at 5000 Marine Drive, Chicago, is locally significant and meets Criterion A for history and C for architecture for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. A fine example of the better class apartment constructed along Lake Michigan in the 1920s, it was developed by George K. Spoor, the founder of Essanay Studios and designed in the Classical Revival style in 1923 by architects Ralph C. Harris and Byron H. Jillson. The building is particularly unusual in reflecting a combination of Classical Revival architecture with Art Moderne updating. The application of both styles exhibits a high level of artistry. In detailing and materials, the building's main facades were inspired by the classicism made popular after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The ground floor interior is Art Moderne. This style, as fashionable in the late 1930s and early 1940s as classicism was in the early 1920s, was selected when the entrance lobby, vestibule, hallways and sitting areas were remodeled in 1941. The Aquitania is a courtyard building, a type chosen from the early 1900s into the 1930s for many better class apartment buildings. Its shape ensures maximum light, ventilation and scenic views of Lake Michigan. Named for the famous Cunard ocean liner, the Aquitania was intended as a better class apartment building when it was first built, and continued to be regarded as elegant when it was remodeled. The Aquitania has received no major stylistic alterations for sixty years. Its period of significance is from 1923 when it was built to 1941 when the interior was remodeled in the Art Moderne style.

At the time the Aquitania was constructed, there were few tall luxury apartments built nearby, directly on or in the vicinity of Lake Michigan. In Uptown, the neighborhood area extending from Irving Park Road (4000 North) to Foster (5200 North), only the Admiral had been built, in 1921. In Edgewater, the only better class building directly on Lake Michigan was the Edgewater Beach Hotel (1915), which has been demolished. There are no Classical Revival apartment buildings in these neighborhoods comparable to the Aquitania in their level of detailing; none have Art Moderne public spaces. Those that currently are located on the east side of Uptown and Edgewater either are stylistically considerably different or have integrity that has been significantly compromised.

**THE BETTER CLASS APARTMENT**

The Aquitania was built as a high class apartment building meant to appeal to upper middle or to upper class residents. The better class apartment building that has evolved into today's luxury high rise was a far cry from the small and cramped flat that early on was associated with the seamier side of life in the city. Wealthy Chicagoans were generally not interested in communal living in the 1870s and 1880s because the most common image of apartment living was of the crowded tenement with narrow dark living units. Known as "railroad apartments", the plan typically had a living room in the front and a dining room and kitchen in the back connected by a narrow dark corridor with bedrooms and a bath opening off it. Out of necessity, the less fortunate had to live in these flats, and there were many. A survey in the 1890 census showed that 71% of Chicagoans lived in multi-family

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units<sup>7</sup>, but they were not apartments built to appeal to the upper classes. Rather they were designed as speculative ventures to meet the needs of people who had to abandon the idea of owning their own home because they couldn't afford it.

Apartment living as an upper class or upper middle class phenomenon began in New York in 1869, when Richard Morris Hunt designed the Stuyvesant Apartments. Even if the persistent image (and usually the reality) of apartment living was associated with tenement life and the misfortune of the poor rather than the privilege of the rich, a number of quality apartment buildings such as the Dakota (1883), the Chelsea (1883) and the Central Park Apartments (1883-1927) were built in New York city before the turn of the century. They contained large and luxurious units to appeal to society's cream. New York was a big and densely-populated city like Paris, where apartment living prevailed, and Paris was regarded as the world's fashion capital, so it was natural for New Yorkers to look to Paris for inspiration. In fact, large apartment houses were known generically known as "French Flats". Wim de Wit has noted in an essay on apartment houses in *Chicago History* that "At first, members of the wealthy upper class were unwilling to leave their mansions and resettle in an apartment. Their reluctance began to give way as the apartment became associated with notions of status and cachet that implied that those who lived in an American apartment could command the same respect as the old prestigious families who for a number of years had been living in Parisian ones."<sup>8</sup> In the 1890s and first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, numerous articles in architectural magazines described how the French lived in their enormous apartments.

Chicago, however, was not New York. From early on, Chicago had resisted multifamily residences of any kind. Everett Chamberlain, wrote in his 1874 guidebook, *Chicago and its Suburbs*, "The fact is thoroughly established that ninety-nine Chicago families in every hundred will go an hour's drive into the country or toward the country rather than live under or over another family as the average New Yorker or Parisian does."<sup>9</sup> While not necessarily accurate, Chamberlain expressed a fairly widely-held sentiment. It was not until 1904 that Chicago yellow pages had a listing for apartments; prior to that time, multi-family dwellings were listed under hotels. Residents cherished the view of Chicago as a community of free standing single-family residences even long after it had become a thriving commercial city rather than a small town.

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<sup>7</sup>Gwendolyn Wright. *Moralism and the Modern Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago: 1873-1913*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, p.83.

<sup>8</sup>Wim de Wit. "American houses and Bungalows: Building the Flat City", *Chicago History*, Winter 1983-1984, p.21.

<sup>9</sup>Everett Chamberlain. *Chicago and its Suburbs*. Chicago: T. A. Hungerford, 1874. PL. 88

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Chicagoans always embraced living in private residences, so many of the earlier better class apartment buildings tended to resemble single family homes. Many were six flats, small apartment buildings of three stories. These were camouflaged like houses, built in a domestic scale with a single central entrance and projecting bays and porches—resembling a mansion far more than the many blocks of multifamily flats over stores that had begun to spring up in the late 1880s along Chicago's commercial arteries. Although thousands of not very remarkable six flats were built all over Chicago from the 1880s through the teens, there were a number with more elaborate detailing and larger units that were geared toward renting to the more well to do. The use of projecting bays and other elegant details were also adapted to taller buildings like the Aquitania, giving them a domestic aspect and providing nicer views as well as additional light and ventilation.

Courtyard apartment buildings also came to be built throughout the city and nearby suburbs. Many of them, especially those that were larger and more sumptuous, took their cue from the design of single family residences. They were typically low brick 4-story structures, which were first built in the early 1900s, and generally took the shape of a "U", an "E", an "H" or an "S". Built by the 100s into the 1930s, they had multiple entrances, so that a single entrance, embellished with stylistic details, accessed only six units. Exterior brick walls had Classical, Georgian, Tudor or Prairie-inspired stone trim. Projecting bays were common. The shape of the courtyard building allowed for yards, which could be beautifully landscaped like single family homes. It also guaranteed privacy, with generally only two units opening off a hallway on each floor. The apartment units had a much more pleasant layout than the railroad flat, with considerably more light and ventilation. And the interiors were nicely fitted out, with hardwood floors, elegant wood cabinetry and brass hardware. These courtyard buildings were a far cry from earlier buildings where courtyards were merely a necessary part of the plan, devised only to secure light and ventilation for the interior and rear rooms. The earlier courtyards had always opened to the rear of the structure or had been narrow slits, completely enclosed between the long deep plans that were the customary apartment house scheme for the crowded city block.

A handful of elegant courtyard apartments were built in the early 1900s in Uptown and, to the north, in Edgewater. By necessity, the numerous courtyard buildings that were built throughout Chicago had to be placed in less densely populated outlying neighborhoods like Hyde Park, Logan Square, Edgewater or Rogers Park; it would have been extremely difficult and expensive to assemble land in areas closer to the city where town houses or worker's cottages were built tight on each other. The Pattington Apartments, built in 1903-04 at 660-700 W. Irving Park Road in Uptown, was designed by architect David Postle in the form of an "E", with two broad courts to accommodate 72 units. Many of the two and three-bedroom units had a library in addition to the parlor and dining room; all had maid's rooms. Built near the lakefront as an investment for a Milwaukee grain speculator, the Pattington was marketed to upper-middle-class families as an alternative to single-family

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residences.<sup>10</sup> A local commentator said of the Pattington that “This grand structure appears on the ground more like a group of large private mansions with beautiful parks binding them together in one social circle.”<sup>11</sup> The Manor House, designed in 1908 at 1021-1029 W. Bryn Mawr Avenue in Edgewater, by J.E.O. Pridmore, was a particularly luxurious Tudor Revival courtyard apartment building with only six units (later subdivided) of twelve to sixteen rooms. The courtyard form used in low structures like the Pattington and the Manor House could easily be adapted to taller elevator buildings. Examples include the Drake Hotel (1919) and the Aquitania, which could provide apartments with an elegant setting and amenities similar to those found in the walk up courtyard buildings.

The first tall better class apartment buildings were constructed in the 1880s in the area near Ontario and State Streets known as McCormickville because so many members of the Chicago’s prominent McCormick family lived in mansions in the neighborhood. Buildings such as the Mentone Flats (1882) and the Virginia (1888) were nestled in this exclusive residential district along fashionable streets near the lakefront and convenient to transportation. Disguising 3 and 4-story apartment buildings as mansions worked quite well, but it was considerably more difficult to make a building look like a large home when the building was very tall and required an elevator. It was far easier to imitate hotel design. The best of hotels provided a home away from home, and, in fact, these buildings resembled hotels and were often called hotels—offering similar status and service.<sup>12</sup> The Virginia was a financial success, and that was a impetus for further construction, but it was preparation for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition that ushered in Chicago’s first apartment building boom. Built to provide accommodation for Fair visitors as well as homes for the city’s population, most were located among or near mansions along the streets by the boulevards, between the Loop and the Fair’s Hyde Park site. Some were 3 to 4-story walk ups, but several were 8 to 12-story fireproof masonry buildings. The list includes the Lexington (at the northeast corner of Michigan and Cermak Road) the Great Northern Hotel (at the northeast corner of Dearborn Street and Jackson Boulevard) and the Chicago Beach Hotel (at Hyde Park Boulevard and Cornell). Most have been demolished. Stylistically these buildings were all quite similar. They

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<sup>10</sup>Alice Sinkevitch, Editor. *AIA Guide to Chicago*. Chicago: American Institute of Architects, Chicago Architecture Foundation, Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1993. p. 217

<sup>11</sup>Carroll William Westfall. “The Coming of Age of Chicago’s Flats and Apartments”. Unpublished notes from a lecture presented at the Chicago Historical Society, February 10, 1984. p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Carroll William Westfall. “Home at the Top: “Domesticating Chicago’s Tall Apartment Buildings.”, *Chicago History*, Spring, 1985. pp. 24-27.

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tended to be blocklike in massing with cylindrical towers and featured oriel windows and simple flat wall surfaces. Many were designed by Clinton J. Warren, the acknowledged leader among Chicago's architects of hotels and apartments<sup>13</sup> and took inspiration from the steel frame Chicago School office buildings that had minimal exterior detailing. The designs for these multi-family buildings were a far cry from the historical revival apartments that were to be built after the Exposition.

A national depression in 1893 affected Chicago, despite the Exposition's success, halting construction of hotels and apartment buildings for almost a decade. Residential construction during this period was largely limited to large homes and country houses commissioned by the wealthy who were not impacted.

When construction resumed after the depression, there was a new wave of better class apartment buildings. Stylistically, they were a far cry from the simple pre-Fair buildings related to Chicago School office buildings. The Columbian Exposition, with its Classical Revival monuments, ushered in a commitment to historical revival architecture, so that the latest in luxury apartments borrowed quite literally from various versions of classical architecture including the Colonial as well as other historical styles. Architect Benjamin Marshall's Marshall Apartments, 1100 Lake Shore Drive, (demolished) was characteristic. It stood nine stories with a line of bow windows at each corner, and was capped by a dentilled cornice. Built in 1905, the Marshall was Georgian Revival, modeled after the single family mansion located a few blocks away designed by McKim, Mead and White for Bryon Lathrop in 1892. The Marshall was at the foot of the Gold Coast and the first apartment building on North Lake Shore Drive, which was then a thoroughfare for exclusive residences. It set a new high standard for apartment buildings.<sup>14</sup> In 1911, Benjamin Marshall, who took the place of Clinton J. Warren as the specialist in designing better class apartment buildings, built 1550 North State Street, overlooking Lincoln Park and the lake. This apartment building, with bowed corners and balconettes, is regarded as the leader among all of Chicago's luxury apartment buildings.<sup>15</sup> A report issued in 1912 reported that the class of people who lived on the Drive would not take kindly to the apartment house idea, yet pointed out that the Marshall Apartments was

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<sup>13</sup>Carl Condit. *The Chicago School of Architecture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964. p.151.

<sup>14</sup>Westfall, C.W. "From Homes to Towers: A Century of Chicago's Best Hotels and Tall Apartment Buildings." *Chicago Architecture: 1872-1922, Birth of a Metropolis*, Edited by John Zukowsky. Munich: Prestel-Verlag in Association with The Art Institute of Chicago, 1987. p. 279.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.* p.278.

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particularly notable and "...it will be but a question of a few years until this famous drive is dotted with stately apartments."<sup>16</sup>

It wasn't very many years before apartment living along North Lake Shore Drive became increasingly fashionable, and the wealthy accepted apartment buildings there as desirable. The family mansions on the south side were being abandoned as the exclusive neighborhood aged and became unattractive due to the increasing stench of a coal-powered railroad running up the lakefront and the encroachment of commerce. No railroad sullied the lakefront on the north side, and reversing the Chicago river's flow made the lake cleaner and more appealing. Facing directly on Lake Michigan offered proximity to beaches and Lincoln Park, access to a peaceful scenic drive and stunning views. The Burnham Plan of 1909 allowed for no construction directly on the lake so that a retaining the view of Lake Michigan was assured.

Although World War I (1914-18) slowed down construction, several 8 to 12-story apartment buildings were built between 1905 and 1914 north along Lake Shore Drive,<sup>17</sup> and by the late teens the marketing of luxury apartment homes there was fairly aggressive. Both courtyard buildings and tall buildings were advertised as enticing, and found their way into publications including Albert J. Partridge and Harold Bradley's, *Directory to Apartments of the Better Class along the North Side of Chicago* (Chicago, 1917). Partridge and Bradley advertised themselves as "Brokers in Apartments of the Better Class," producing this elegant hardcover folio illustrating several luxury apartments. The introduction notes that "apartments are now in existence in Chicago which provide a degree of luxury in respect to spaciousness and number of rooms, bathrooms, high quality of finish and interior decoration, which would be found only in private houses costing upward of \$100,000."<sup>18</sup>

The war had interrupted the momentum of construction activity in Chicago, but this lull didn't change the style or type of apartment buildings that were to be built in the 1920s—only the size. After World War I, the pace of construction for tall buildings quickened, with the new buildings differing from their predecessors in being very much larger. W.C. Westfall noted in a talk he gave before the Society of Architectural Historians, May 25, 1984,

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<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.* Westfall quotes Raymond Thompson, "Apartment Houses on Chicago's lake Shore Drive," *The Apartment House* 2. (Aug. 1912), pp. 16-17.

<sup>17</sup>Carroll William Westfall. "Chicago Apartments: 1871-1923". Unpublished manuscript of a slide talk given by Westfall for the Chicago, Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians, May 25, 1984.

<sup>18</sup>*Apartment Homes of the Better Class*. Chicago: A. J. Partridge & Harold Bradley, 1917, p. 2.

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that the increased size was allowed by the unconnected and largely coincidental introduction in 1923 of Chicago's first comprehensive zoning and land use ordinance. The ordinance reinforced the pattern of land development already mapped by the market by reserving the broad sweep of the lakefront residential district for tall apartments. It also increased the allowable envelope an apartment building could occupy.<sup>19</sup>

Numerous tall better class apartments along Lake Shore Drive were built during the boom period of the 1920s. The building hiatus of the late teens did not affect the style of 1920s' apartments. With the construction of the Drake Hotel in 1919 and the completion of the Michigan Avenue bridge across the Chicago River connecting the loop with the north side in 1920, dozens of elegant buildings in a variety of historical revival styles were built facing the Lake and Lincoln Park, from East Lake Shore Drive to within two miles of Chicago's north city limits. Replacing most of the earlier mansions of the Gold Coast, these Classical, Georgian, Tudor, Italian Renaissance and French Renaissance Revival style buildings contained units of 1 to 10 or more rooms. In some areas along the drive, the buildings are clustered; in others the apartment building stands alone. Those at the north end of the drive tend not to be directly adjacent to one another. The Aquitania stands alone, although the east end of the north facade has no windows, perhaps anticipating the construction of another tall apartment building.

The better class apartments that were constructed during the teens and twenties were designed by several different architectural offices. A handful of firms, like Marshall & Fox (Benjamin Marshall's firm) and Fugard & Knapp, were well known for their tall apartment buildings for the upper and middle classes; many like McNally and Quinn or Harris and Jillson, designers of the Aquitania, were less well known, but turned out distinguished work. In 1928, the brokerage firm of Baird & Warner published *A Portfolio of Fine Apartment Homes*. It was an elegant bound volume, filled with engravings and photos, comparable to Partridge and Bradley's book on better class apartments. The Aquitania was featured in this Portfolio.<sup>20</sup>

### THE AQUITANIA

Plans for the Aquitania, described as "Apartments for George K. Spoor" on the blueprints, were drawn up in October of 1922 by his architects Ralph C. Harris and Byron H. Jillson. Spoor had owned the property where the apartment was to be built since 1912. At that time, he purchased five lots (#13-17) along the north side of Argyle Street, making his own home at 908 Argyle in a residence at the west end of the property he bought. He

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<sup>19</sup>Westfall. Unpublished manuscript of slide talk, May 25, 1984. p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>*A Portfolio of Fine Homes*. Compiled by the Michigan Erie Office of Baird & Warner, Incorporated, 640 No. Michigan Ave., Chicago, 1928. p. 64.

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remained there until his death in 1953. Lot 17, where he was to build the Aquitania, was the largest parcel. In preparation for construction, he transferred this lot to the Aquitania Building Corporation.<sup>21</sup> At the time Spoor built, this was sparsely settled land facing directly on Lake Michigan, with only a wood breakwater to the east. Like many large apartment buildings, it was constructed on the site of a single family residence. It did not, however, replace an elegant residence like apartment buildings constructed further south. The June 17, 1922, Plat of Survey that Spoor had drawn up by A.I. Silander indicates a small frame cottage with a side porch was located at the west end of the lot.<sup>22</sup>

Although the Aquitania did not replace elegant homes, the land Spoor purchased was located adjacent to prestigious areas. Two streets of handsome city residences were nearby. Hutchinson Street, a two block east-west street at about 4200 North remains a veritable showcase of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century homes, with several by architect George W. Maher; Castlewood Terrace at about 4900 North, also running east from the Lake and Lincoln Park, remains a street of distinguished Arts and Crafts and Historical Revival homes. The tony Saddle and Cycle Club (built in 1898 by Jarvis Hunt with a beach, boathouse and clubhouse for cyclists and equestrians riding on the lakefront) was located three blocks to the north at 900 West Foster. And slightly further to the north was the Edgewater Beach Hotel (demolished) a lavish resort of 400 rooms, famous for its beach walk, big band dance performances and the Marine Dining Room, where the bands played to formally clad diners and dancers while the hotel's own WEBH sent out radio broadcasts. Built in 1915, its elegance and opulence were legendary.<sup>23</sup> North of the Edgewater, more elegant homes were located along Sheridan Road.

George K. Spoor, who developed the Aquitania, is a famous Chicagoan, known for having created Essanay Studios. One of the nation's premier early movie companies, it produced hundreds of motion pictures featuring such stars as Charlie Chaplin, Gloria Swanson, Francis X. Bushman and cinema's first cowboy hero—and a co-founder of Essanay—G.M. "Bronco Billy" Anderson.<sup>24</sup> When Spoor died, his obituary notice in *Variety* stated,

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<sup>21</sup>Tract Book 542A1, Cook County Recorder of Deeds, Cook County Building, Chicago, p. 353.

<sup>22</sup>"Certificate of Survey", Lots 16 and 17, in Subdivision of Sub Block 3 in Subdivision of Block 5 in Argyle being a Subdivision of S.E. Fractional 1/4 of Section 8, Township 40N., Range 14 E. of the Third Principal meridian.

<sup>23</sup>Susan M. Baldwin. "Edgewater Beach Apartments." National Register nomination for apartment building constructed on grounds of hotel in 1928 by Benjamin Marshall.

<sup>24</sup>"Essanay Studios, 1333-45 W. Argyle Street. "Preliminary Staff Summary of Information. Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks" in November 1989. Reprinted



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"He made Chicago the film capital of the world." Spoor set up his film studio in 1907, nearby at 1333-45 Argyle. The company became an immediate success with its first film, "An Awful Skate, or the Hobo on Rollers" which starred Ben Turpin as an erratic roller skater careening into people on a city street. In 1908, he made "The Life of Jesse James", using locations in and around Chicago. Spoor is said to have discovered Wallace Beery in a circus as an elephant trainer, and the old Essanay lot was the site of his marriage to Gloria Swanson. The famous Hollywood gossip columnist Luella Parsons was, for a time, in charge of Essanay's script department. He pulled off a coup, capturing Charlie Chaplin and signing him away from Max Sennett's film company in 1914. Chaplin appeared in fifteen films for Essanay. Though Essanay Studios was very successful, the loss of Chaplin, the star system and its associated contracts and the centralization of the industry in California necessitated the closing of Essanay in 1917. Spoor sold it to Wilding Studios, a subsidiary of Bell & Howell, but he didn't abandon the film business. In the 1920s he worked on the development of a wide-screen process known as Natural Vision. The invention used film 70 millimeters wide and was shown on a screen that was 70' x 34'. In 1927, he filmed "The Flagmaker" on the West coast.<sup>25</sup> Although Spoor spent four million dollars developing this device just before the Depression and after the advent of sound movies and it did not prove successful, he is said to have recouped his fortune in Texas Oil<sup>26</sup>

Spoor had an entrepreneurial spirit that he focused on films, but that did not prevent him from investing in oil or real estate. His development of the Aquitania was timely and smart. Built during a prosperous period when similar high class apartment building were being constructed, his choice of location--on the Lake, near fine neighborhoods, by an elegant club and a luxurious hotel as well as in close proximity to shops and transportation on Sheridan Road--provided enormous potential for success. Completed in 1923, the Aquitania was one of the early better class apartment buildings located at the north end of Chicago's lakefront. Spoor continued to own the building, under the name Aquitania Building Corp., until August, 1929, when it was sold to Sidney H. Kahn, under the name of the Argyle Lake Shore Building. In 1936, the name of the corporation was changed to the

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March 1996. The Essanay Studio building is a designated Chicago Landmark. The Essanay name takes its "ess" from the S in Spoor and the "ay" from the A in Anderson, who was Spoor's partner.

<sup>25</sup>Most of the information on Spoor not found in the Landmark Commission summary, including the obituary quote, came from an unpublished thesis by George H. Scheetz, "The Chicago Film Industry: Beginnings to 1918" prepared for the university of Illinois--Urbana, Department of English. A copy is in the files of the Chicago Landmark Commission, Chicago.

<sup>26</sup>Charles A. Jahant. "Chicago: Center of the Silent Film Industry." *Chicago History*, Spring--Summer 1974, p. 53.

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Aquitania Apartment Company. It remained under this umbrella until 1949, when the Aquitania Apartment Company deeded the property to 5000 Marine Drive and the building was converted into a cooperative.<sup>27</sup>

The Aquitania was recognized almost immediately as significant. It was published in the December, 1924, issue of *Western Architect*. Several plates, including a water color rendering, a typical floor plan and illustrations of exterior details, the lobby and apartment interiors, were included. The building apparently was viewed as an important contribution to the neighborhood because just after it was completed two apartment buildings were constructed across the street. The "Argyle Beach Apartments", a courtyard building, was constructed in 1927; the Argyle Shore Hotel was built further to the west in 1925.<sup>28</sup>

So many features of the Aquitania define it as a luxury building— its siting, its form, its homelike features, its modern conveniences and its style. These were summarized in Baird & Warner's 1928 *Portfolio of Fine Apartment Homes*:

The Aquitania is located at fifty hundred north, on the Lake Shore at Argyle Street. The district is known for its convenient transportation facilities, its many amusement offerings and the character of the neighborhood. The immediate locality is, of course, quiet and reserved by reason of its proximity to the lake.

The building is fifteen stories in height, containing apartments of from three to six rooms, unfurnished. Each apartment, by reason of its design and layout, is assured ample sunlight and ventilation, and at the same time the privacy of a detached residence.

The room sized are generously large, and are made particularly attractive by reason of the care in the choice of decorating and finish. Baths are tiled, the five and six-room apartments having two baths.

The mechanical equipment of the building is of high standard, including high speed electric elevators, vapor heat, incinerator, electric fireplaces, water filtering system and electric refrigeration.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Tract Book 542A1, p. 353.

<sup>28</sup>This information is taken from a Sanborn Map published by the Sanborn Company, New York. Chicago, Volume 17, 1928 corrected to 1949, p. 90.

<sup>29</sup>*A Portfolio of Fine Apartment Homes*. p. 64.

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At the bottom of the page featuring the Aquitania there is the comment "under resident management". The manager of the building was Mrs. Ada M. Spoor, who kept an apartment in 1B.<sup>30</sup> She was George Spoor's wife. It is interesting to note that in the index to the *Portfolio* the building is called the Aquitania Hotel. One could speculate that the building allowed short term rentals, especially for film personnel. The building was not built with a dining room, but it does contain informal sitting areas on the first floor, and it may have provided maid service and, although not stated in the 1928 *Portfolio*, some furnished apartments. The building has two large laundry rooms.

Its lake front site made the building peaceful and appealing for those desiring a fine apartment. But so did its corner location, which allowed for two entrances—one facing Lake Michigan and one facing Argyle Street. Carroll William Westfall, writing in "The Golden Age of Chicago Apartments" for *Inland Architect*, noted that corner lots generally cost more per front and were larger; and therefore they tended to receive buildings designed for a higher stratum of the middle class. They tended to have one or two entrances facing the main street and another facing the side street.<sup>31</sup>

By 1928, when Baird & Warner's *Portfolio* was published, the Aquitania was adjacent to one of Chicago's most inviting amusement areas. Located nearby were the Uptown Theatre (4814 N. Broadway), the Aragon Ballroom (1106 W. Lawrence Avenue) and the Green Mill Lounge. The Spanish Revival movie palace contained 4381 seats and was the largest theater ever for both the architects, Rapp & Rapp and the developers, Balaban & Katz, when it was built in 1925. The Aragon, with its Moorish illusionistic setting, was constructed in 1926 and celebrated the golden age of ballroom dancing.

The form of the Aquitania as well as its desirable location established it as a better class building. Its courtyard shape, with a deep "U" at the front and a shallow "U" at the rear ensured the ample provision of light and air so decried in criticisms of railroad flats. The shallow "U" at the back allows the bedrooms in the rear units to have cross ventilation. The width of the courtyard in front is broad, expanding the views of the park and lake for the units that have their living rooms and dining rooms facing out from the interior of the court. Because the south wing of the building could be longer due to the irregular shape of the lot, it contains the most desirable line of units (Line A) in the building; the A units have a third bedroom which served as a maid's room. In that unit the living room and adjacent bedroom have clear vistas north. Outside, the courtyard ensures a generous amount of

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<sup>30</sup>*Chicago City Directory*, 1928.

<sup>31</sup>Carroll William Westfall. "The Golden Age of Chicago Apartments." *Inland Architect*. November, 1980. p. 21.

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green space, landscaped with a spacious lawn, hedges, flowers and a fountain the amenities found in private yards.

The ground floor plan contributes to the homelike atmosphere of the building. Flanking the more formal lobby, there are two small comfortably-furnished sitting areas that have views of the landscaped courtyard. These informal areas are like sitting rooms in a private residence.

The building's 82 units are distributed with four apartments on the first floor and six on each of the remaining upper floors (not counting a custodian's apartment in the southeast corner of the ground floor. The building has only six units to a floor, with three apartments opening off each of two elevator corridors located in the wings. The floor plan of each unit is organized much like a single-family home in the arrangement of the rooms. As in the best of private homes, the living areas are divided into three separate zones: the public family area (the living and dining rooms), the private family area (the bedrooms) and the service spaces (the kitchen, pantry and maid's room). Even in the smaller units, the clever arrangement of rooms allows for these areas to be separate.

The floor plan allows for every apartment to have two outside walls. All living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms have double windows; the rooms at the east end of the wings have a rounded bays with triple windows facing the lake and park. Each apartment unit is spacious. Rooms are large and ceilings are high, averaging 8'9". The entrance to each apartment opens into a good size reception hall. In Line F it is 9' x 12'; in line C it is 7' x 18'. Living rooms range in from 14' x 20' to 17' x 21'. All apartments have large dining rooms that range from 12' x 16' to 17' x 17'; only the dining room in Line E is small, with the space connected by cupboards to a kitchenette. Wide openings connect the living and dining rooms. Closets are plentiful. All of the units were designed with radiator seats under the windows in the living rooms and some of the dining rooms. All have hardwood floors, crown and base moldings, molded window and door casings and had fireplaces. For safety reasons, the fireplaces have been either walled over or removed. Relatively few of the apartment interiors have received much remodeling. In some apartment units, openings between the reception hall and the living room have been widened. On the fourth floor the units in Line D and Line E have been combined. This is the only instance in the building, and there are few changes in the floor plan of the units. Several apartments have their original wood trimmed panels in the reception, living and dining rooms. Bathrooms have ceramic tile.

In addition to the modern conveniences like incinerators and electric refrigeration, described in the Baird & Warner *Portfolio*, having a rear hall with a service elevator was a very desirable amenity. No fine home would have been without a rear service area accessible from the kitchen.

The style of the Aquitania was inspired by classical architecture. On the exterior, the building assumes the common classical form of base, shaft, capital, with rich stone and terra cotta ornamentation at the base and the

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upper floors of this red brick building. The myriad of artistically organized classical details, including dentilled cornices, pilasters, swags and urns, complements the classical organization of the building. Rich classical ornamentation at ground level appealed to visitors and residents. Similar treatment at the top allowed tall buildings like the Aquitania to be admired from a distance. C. W. Westfall points out in the essay he wrote on apartments for *Chicago Architecture: 1872-1922* that for most of the hotels and apartment buildings built after the World's Columbian Exposition, some form of the classical style provided the basis for the design. Classicism apparently evoked the desired association with the civilized form of urban life these buildings were thought to provide.<sup>32</sup>

In the years following the Exposition, banks, museums and municipal buildings were regularly designed in the Classical Revival style, adopting a full blown commitment to classical architecture, with stone facades, temple fronts and a large vocabulary of classical details. Apartment buildings, hotels and homes borrowed less literally and, in the case of the Pattington (which has Classical Revival entrances), less liberally. Sometimes the architecture that inspired the high style design of hotels and better class apartment buildings was Georgian (like the Marshall), sometimes Italian Renaissance (like the Drake) and sometimes French (like 1550 North State Parkway). Although the design of the Aquitania is related to Georgian architecture in the use of red brick with stone trim, in the bowed window bays and in the 6/1 window configuration, there are no shutters or quoins and the abundance of creatively-applied classical detailing defines the building as Classical Revival. Westfall point out that in Chicago, the classical was often called the colonial or the Georgian.<sup>33</sup>

The architects for the Aquitania were Ralph C. Harris and Byron H. Jillson. Ralph Campbel Harris was born in 1890, received his bachelors degree from the University of Illinois and attended the Armour Institute of Technology (later the Illinois Institute of Technology). The 1931 *Who's Who in Chicago* states that he had been a practicing architect since 1912 and built over 150 buildings in and around Chicago, including the Aquitania Apartments, Canterbury Court and the Devonshire Hotel (19 East Ohio).<sup>34</sup> In his 1920 application for membership in the American Institute of Architects, (A.I.A.) he notes that he had three project costing over \$1,000,000 and that the Aquitania's cost amounted to \$1,500,000.<sup>35</sup> In 1923, he and Jillson shared an office at

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<sup>32</sup>Westfall. "From Homes to Towers....", p. 283.

<sup>33</sup>Westfall, "The Golden Age of Chicago Apartments", p. 22.

<sup>34</sup>*Who's Who in Chicago and Vicinity*. Chicago: The A.N. Marquis Company, 1931. p. 423.

<sup>35</sup>It is interesting that the application was dated May 6, 1920, and the drawings for the Aquitania are dated more than two years later, October, 1922. Harris also wrote in the

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190 North State Street. Harris' obituary, dated June 12, 1966, notes that he had been the Illinois highways architect and a secretary for eight years of the Illinois Society of Architects.<sup>36</sup> He is listed in the 1955 edition of the *American Architects' Directory*. This directory provides the pertinent information that he had traveled in Europe and that he had served as a draftsman for Jarvis Hunt. His travels suggest that Harris had first hand familiarity with European architectural precedents. His work for Hunt is relevant because Hunt had designed the Saddle and Cycle Club and was, in 1925, to serve as architect for one of Chicago's most distinguished apartment buildings, 900 North Michigan (demolished). In the Baird & Warner *Portfolio* and in *Western Architect* only Ralph C. Harris is listed as architect for the Aquitania, with no mention of Jillson..

Byron H. Jillson was born in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1881. His listing in the 1926 *Who's Who in Chicago* mentions no formal architectural training, only that he learned by apprenticeship and home study. It notes that after working in Racine and West Virginia, he served as architect for Swift & Co. Packers in Chicago between 1908 and 1922 and that he practiced under the name of Ralph C. Harris and Byron H. Jillson between 1922-1924.<sup>37</sup> He served as first vice president of the Illinois Society of Architects in the early 1920s. A resident of the Beverly section of Chicago, he designed the Beverly Tennis Club there. From all appearances, Harris had more substantial architectural credentials than did Jillson and perhaps, given the attributions in *Western Architect* and the Baird & Warner *Portfolio*, was more directly involved with the design.

When the Aquitania was first built, it was sited almost directly on Lake Michigan. An old photograph that appear to date from the 1920s shows that the building's port cochere that was to be removed in 1941 was only about three car widths from the breakwater. This stretch was called "Lake Shore Drive" in Baird & Warner's 1928 *Portfolio*,<sup>38</sup> but it looks in the photo like more of a promenade. A second old photo with two men sitting near the breakwater also shows the building to be quite near the water, and it indicates that the breakwater cut west just beyond the north end of the building. Because of the proximity of Lake Michigan and because the "Drive" was not a wide thoroughfare, the need for automobile turn-arounds at both entrances of the Aquitania is understandable.

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application that he had two other apartment projects costing over \$1,000,000, one for Hugh McGlennan and one for M.A. Carroll, both in Chicago.

<sup>36</sup>"Ralph C. Harris". *Chicago Tribune*, June 12, 1966. 1B, p. 14.

<sup>37</sup>*Who's Who in Chicago*. Chicago: The A.N. Marquis Company, 1926. p. 460

<sup>38</sup>*Portfolio*, Index.

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Between 1929 and 1939, Lincoln Park was extended eastward into Lake Michigan at Montrose and northward to Foster Avenue. This was illustrated in a 1933 postcard produced by Curt Teich. The postcard shows the Aquitania and a map of its location in relationship to the park and the lake. In the map, "Lakeshore Outer Drive" is shown as running through the center of the park. The road known today as Marine Drive was then called "Lakeshore Service Drive". Montrose Harbour and a bathing beach are illustrated as being accessed from Montrose, Wilson, Lawrence and Foster. The 340 acres of landfill that was added to Lincoln Park included open meadow spaces for ballfields, bridle paths, bicycle paths, roads and parking lots. All these amenities close at hand made the Aquitania that much more desirable.

In May, 1940, plans were drawn up to remove the roadway passing under the port cochere, the port cochere itself and the small vestibule connecting the port cochere to the foyer. At the same time, the Argyle Street drive to the entrance door, the small semicircular canopy cantilevered over the entrance doors and the numbers "832" over the door were removed.

When the vestibule and porte cochere were removed from the east facade, the new Marine Drive entrance was built in a stripped down classical style, with a simple rectangular stone portico flanking the doorway. Unadorned square Doric columns and pilasters on the wall behind the columns echo the pilasters framing the windows on the first two floors of the building. But they are considerably less detailed with no fluting or elaborate capitals or base moldings. The entablature contains slightly raised round discs over each column, suggesting the more elaborate rosettes over each of the building's pilasters. The cornice is much shallower, thinner and less pronounced than that capping the second floor or the top of the building. The style of this remodeled entry is a simpler modulation of the classicism that characterizes the building. Its austerity is in keeping with the simplicity that characterized architecture of the mid 1930s to the early 1940s. On Argyle street the canopy was replaced by a simple long ornamental marquis (as it is detailed on the drawings) that is light in scale and extends from the entrance doors to the sidewalk, providing protection from the weather. Both sets of entrance doors were replaced by stainless steel doors with curved handles that have a streamlined profile.<sup>39</sup>

The architect selected for alterations was Louis R. Solomon who, in 1956, formed an association with John Cordwell. Later the firm became Solomon Cordwell Buenz. and Assocs.<sup>40</sup>. It is a firm well known in Chicago for having designed Presidential Towers, South Commons, Sandburg Village and several Sheridan Road and

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<sup>39</sup>This information was taken from the "Supplementary General Conditions and Specifications", which are owned by the management of the building.

<sup>40</sup>The General Conditions note that the architect was L.R. Solomon & Associates, 185 North Wabash Avenue, Chicago, and that this was job #253.

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Lake Shore Drive highrises. Louis Solomon was born in 1905. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1931, the same year as William Pereira and Charles Luckman. It was in the depths of the Depression, but Solomon, although supplementing his income with other things, always practiced architecture. In 1941-42, the same years that Solomon was designing the alteration of the Aquitania, he was part of a group of architects known as "Associated Architects" who designed two and three-story low income housing projects including the 834-unit Robert H. Brooks Homes and the 586-unit Frances Cabrini Homes.<sup>41</sup>

The interior designers for the remodeling were Smith & Herman. The Aquitania was Job #41-307, and the drawings are dated 1941. Their letterhead indicates that they practiced at 734 East 79<sup>th</sup> Street, Chicago. Although research thus far has turned up no information on the firm, the building management office has a complete set of blueprints. Their detailed drawings and specifications reflect the work of accomplished designers. Elegance of materials and artistically conceived, and sometimes playful, design features characterize their approach.<sup>42</sup>

The ground floor public spaces were originally designed in the Classical Revival style to compliment the design of the exterior. It is known what the interior public spaces looked like from the original plans. Additional information is also available in the December, 1924, issue of *Western Architect*, which included illustrations of the lobby. The photos of the two-story lobby show a deep cornice with an acanthus frieze, Corinthian pilasters in the corners, glass paneled doors set in tall arched entrances, a wrought iron ceiling fixture and sconces.<sup>43</sup> When the first floor public interiors were modernized in 1941, this lobby and the other spaces were transformed, updated, but in a manner that was elegantly designed and reflective of the Art Moderne style that was popular during the late 1930s and early 1940s.

The Art Moderne grew out of the style that has come to be called Art Deco, named for the Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes, held in Paris in 1925 to showcase an original design aesthetic that strove for modernity and an expression to complement the machine age. The style was

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<sup>41</sup>Devereux Bowly, Jr., *The Poorhouse: Subsidized Housing in Chicago, 1895-1976*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978. pp. 34-42.

<sup>42</sup>Sharon Darling, who wrote the book *Chicago Furniture Art, Craft & Industry, 1833-1983*, commented in a phone interview, June, 2001, that like today, Chicago had many competent small interior design firms, that were not necessarily well known or easy to research.

<sup>43</sup>"The Aquitania Hotel, Chicago", *Western Architect*. Vol XXXIII, December, 1924, Plates 9-12.



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characterized by flat surfaces, simple geometric ornament and the use of modern materials. Art Moderne took this a step further, emphasizing streamlined curves, influenced by the design of ships airplanes and automobiles. There was a shift from the crisp rectangularity of the late 1920s and early 1930s to the aerodynamic lines of speed that symbolized progress and efficiency. Corners were softened and contours were more graceful. The effects realized were frequently sophisticated and theatrical. In Smith & Herman's design for the first floor of the Aquitania, simple flat or curving surfaces dominate and the detailing is inspired by geometry.<sup>44</sup> Moderne design features are seen in the rounded corners, stylized refinements and dramatic lighting effects. Especially during the 1930s, painted murals were frequently incorporated into the design of major rooms in public buildings. The foyer of the Aquitania contains murals in the rounded corners painted by Louis K. Weinzalbaum, who designed interiors at the Chicago 1933 Century of Progress.

Elegant materials, artistically organized, dominate the lobby--the Aquitania's most prominent public space. Walls are fluted, with a flexwood veneer of silver grey aspen, the mirror is polished plate glass with beveled joints, and the heating vents are covered with a hinged bronze ornamental grill. Special attention was paid to the design of the large ceiling fixture. It is round, plaster, with an opal glass border set within a bronzed frame for panel access; the inner circle is segmented, of rough-cut opal glass surrounding a glass ornament. The rather playful and exotic metal sconces, which are found in a more simplified form throughout the first floor, are graceful interpretations of a papyrus plant. The rectangular ceiling fixtures found throughout the first floor hallways and sitting area are as elegant in their use of materials as the bronze and glass ceiling fixture and as graceful as the sconces in their detailing. They are bronze, with frosted glass and stylized leaflike ornament at the corners.

The murals painted by Louis L. Weinzalbaum in the southwest and northwest corners of the lobby are stylized palm fonds and philodendrons. The foliate designs, which are tinted blue with white highlights and set against an earth-tone background, were clearly part of the decorating scheme, picking up the blue-grey color of the walls and the white sconces.

Although little is known about Weinzalbaum, his life is not a total mystery. He had offices at 1715 North Wells Street, Chicago. His obituary, dated October 16, 1953, states that he was president of a painting and decorating firm and that he was head designer for the color scheme for the Chicago World's Fair.<sup>45</sup> The latter statement

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<sup>44</sup>The office of the buildings has original blueprints including specifications for the 1941 remodeling. They show that the designer was Smith & Herman; the job number was 41-307.

<sup>45</sup>"Louis L. Weinzalbaum", Obituary, *Chicago Tribune*. October 16, 1953.

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seems, at present, not born out in fact.<sup>46</sup> Even so, records available at the University of Illinois at Chicago on the 1933 Century of Progress, which extended into 1934, indicate his involvement. A letter from Howard L Cheney, Design & Construction Division, notes that he was given building permits for painting and decorating the University of Chicago exhibit.<sup>47</sup> He also received permits to paint at various locations for the General Cigar Co.<sup>48</sup> Other correspondence indicates that Weinzelbaum sued one of his clients, Hazel M. Thorud, over a bill owed to paint and decorate the Fish Bar and Restaurant at the concession known as Miller's High Life on the Enchanted Isle.<sup>49</sup>

#### CONTEXT

While there are several tall apartment buildings in both Uptown and Edgewater, they differ considerably from the Aquitania—in the way they combine style, form and function. There are none that are such a superb example of Classical Revival architecture on the exterior. Those that reference classicism have been noticeably compromised. The buildings that retain classical references cannot claim an elegant Art Moderne remodeling.

There are three tall apartment buildings that have some classical detailing. That which is most similar to the Aquitania is located at 4300 Marine Drive, at the northeast corner of Junior Terrace and Marine Drive, but its Classical Revival two-story front portico with paired columns supporting an entablature is its major classical feature. The design for the remainder of the building is predominantly Georgian Revival, borrowing some small classical elements. This building is not a courtyard type and considerably more massive-looking than the Aquitania. The Somerset, built in 1920 as an apartment hotel by S.N. Crowen at the northeast corner of

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<sup>46</sup>Joseph Urban, a New York designer, was chosen to color the fair for the 1933 Century of Progress. He selected the color palette, and although he became ill at the end of 1932 and died in July, 1933, his assistant, Otto Teegen, supervised the application of Urban's scheme. There is no mention of any relationship between Weinzelbaum and Urban either in an issue of *Chicago History* on the Fair's color and light scheme (Susan Talbot-Stanaway, "The Giant Jewel," *Chicago History*, Vol. XXII, July, 1993., p.16-17) or in information researched at the library of the University of Illinois at Chicago, which contains archives from the 1933 Fair.

<sup>47</sup>Howard L. Cheney letter to Louis L. Weinzelbaum, April 18, 1934.

<sup>48</sup>C.F. Baker letter to L.L. Weinzelbaum, June 13, 1934.

<sup>49</sup>There are several letters in the archives from Weinzelbaum his attorney (and son), Maurice S. Weinzelbaum, the Office of the Comptroller at the Century of Progress and others.

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Sheridan Road and Argyle, is a courtyard building facing Sheridan Road. Standing eight stories, it once had a curving stone arcade with handsome detailing across the front. A photograph of it was published in *The Architectural Record*, accompanying an article on "Tendencies in Apartment House Design" featuring courtyard plans. Today the front has been totally modernized, and there are only sparse remnants of classical features left. Although the Somerset was a beautiful building when it was first built, Sheridan Road was a commercial street and the building's views were not as compelling as those from the units at the Aquitania. The Admiral, built in 1921 at Foster and what is today Marine Drive, has a beautiful lakefront location and had some classical detailing including a three-part organization and balconettes with stone balustrades. The integrity of this building, designed by John Nyden, has been severely altered, with additions on the first floor of the side facing the lake and a new entrance and wing on the side facing Foster Street. This building was featured in the Baird & Warner *Portfolio*<sup>50</sup>, but apartment interiors did not have the amenities found in a better class building. The rooms in the apartments were small and many had bed closets in the living room and kitchenettes opening off very small dining areas. The largest apartment was designed with only one bedroom.

There were are two apartment buildings comparable in size and quality to the Aquitania. Both are in Edgewater and both were built with lake views in mind. One is the "Renaissance" at 5510 North Sheridan Road, designed by Quinn & Christiansen in 1927. It is a tall slender apartment building that was recently listed on the National Register. It has two large units to a floor, qualifying it as a better class apartment, but is French Renaissance Revival, with few classical details, stylistically very different from the Aquitania. The other fine apartment building in the area, also listed on the National Register, is the 19-story Edgewater Beach Apartments, built by Benjamin Marshall in 1929. With a very grand lobby and shops on the ground floor, it resembles a hotel more than an apartment building like the Aquitania, which features more home-like ground-floor public spaces. The design contains no classical references.

The Aquitania is significant in presenting an excellent example of a better class apartment building designed in the Classical Revival style, with elegant Art Moderne interiors in the public spaces. It is distinctive and unusual in its neighborhood, retaining excellent stylistic integrity.

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<sup>50</sup>Baird & Warner *Portfolio*, p. 60.

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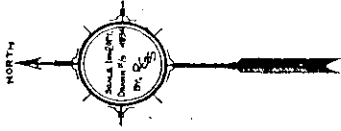
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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

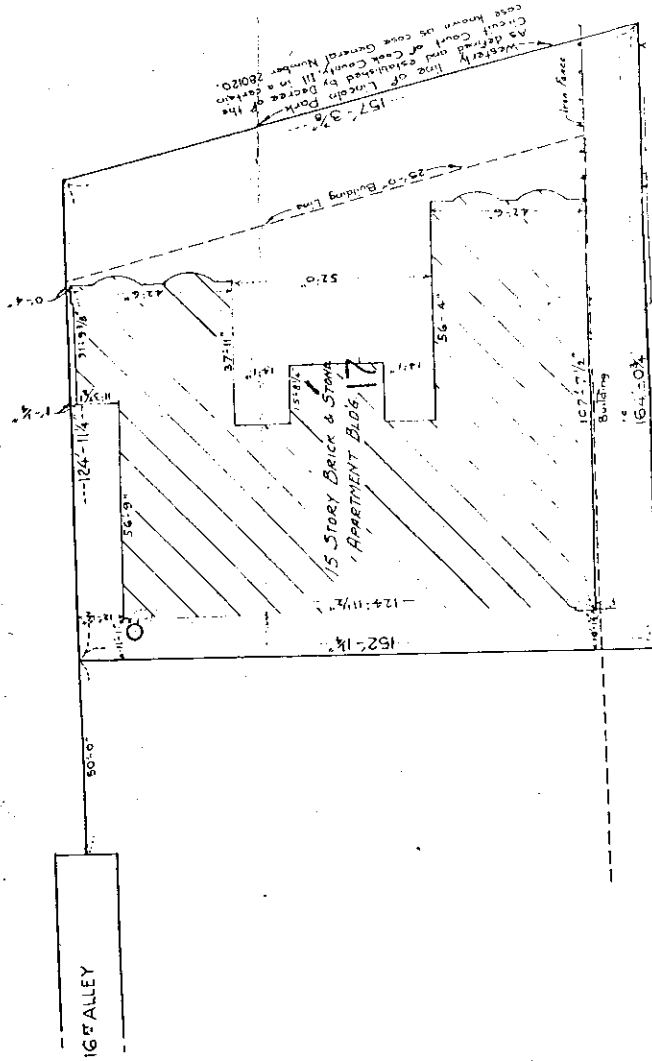
Lot 17 in Subdivision of Sub Block 3 in Subdivision of Block 5 in Argyle being a Subdivision in S. E. Fraction 1/4 of Section 8, Township 40 North, Range 14 E. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Principal Meridian.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The property includes the building and lot historically associated with the Aquitania and that retains historic integrity.



Lot 17 in Subdivision of Sub Block 3 in Subdivision of Block 5 in Argyle, being a Subdivision in S.E. Fraction 1/4 of Section 8, Township 40N., Range 14E. of the 3rd Prin. Mer.



THE AQUITANIA  
5000 MAZINE DRNE  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

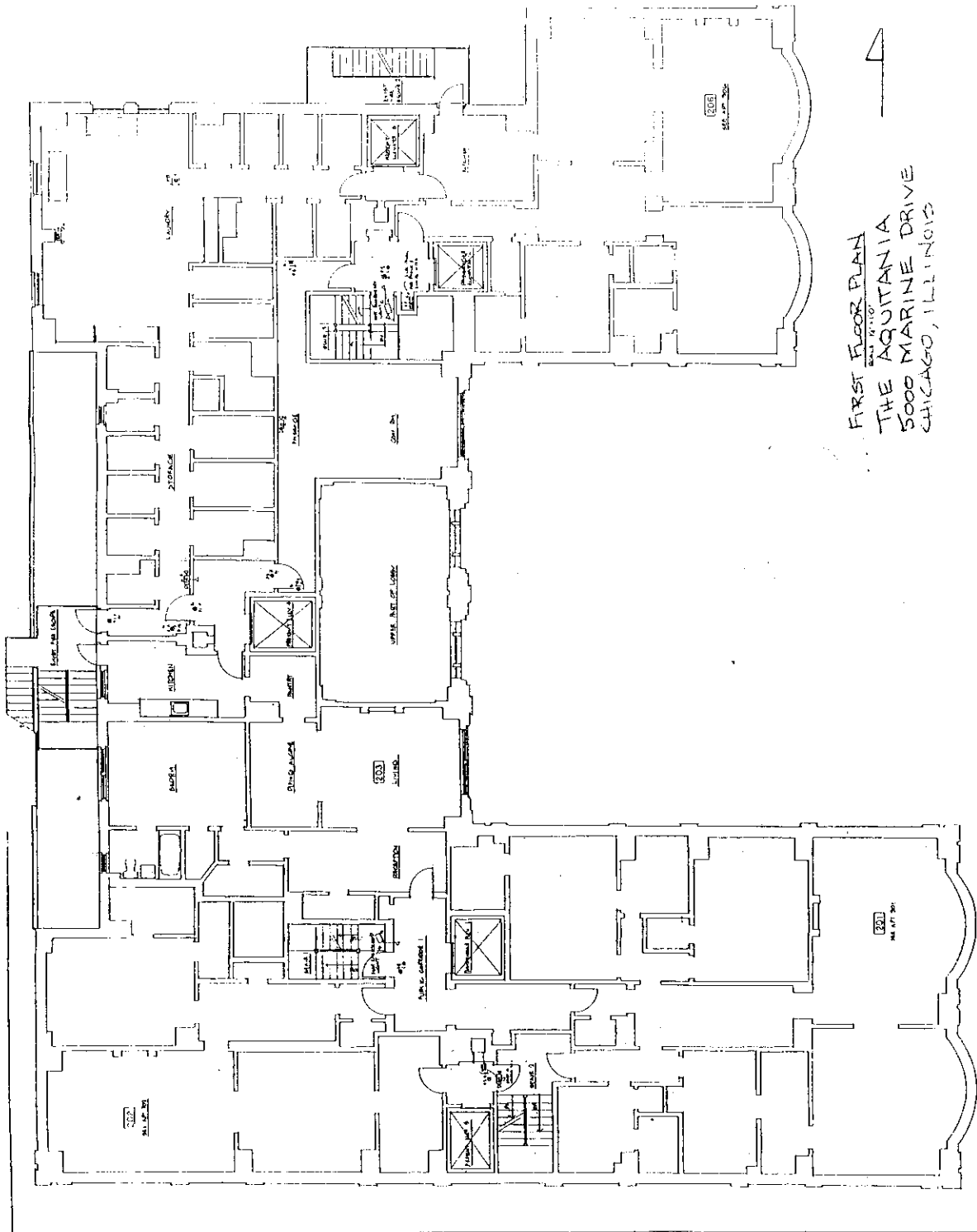
ARGYLE

0 = CITY DATUM  
 All dimensions are marked thus 154'-0 1/2" which indicates 154 feet and 1/2" 1/25ths  
 NOTE - COMPARE ALL POINTS BEFORE BUILDING AND AT ONCE REPORT TO THE SURVEYOR  
 POINTS FROM MARKER

Checked by \_\_\_\_\_ Surveyor.





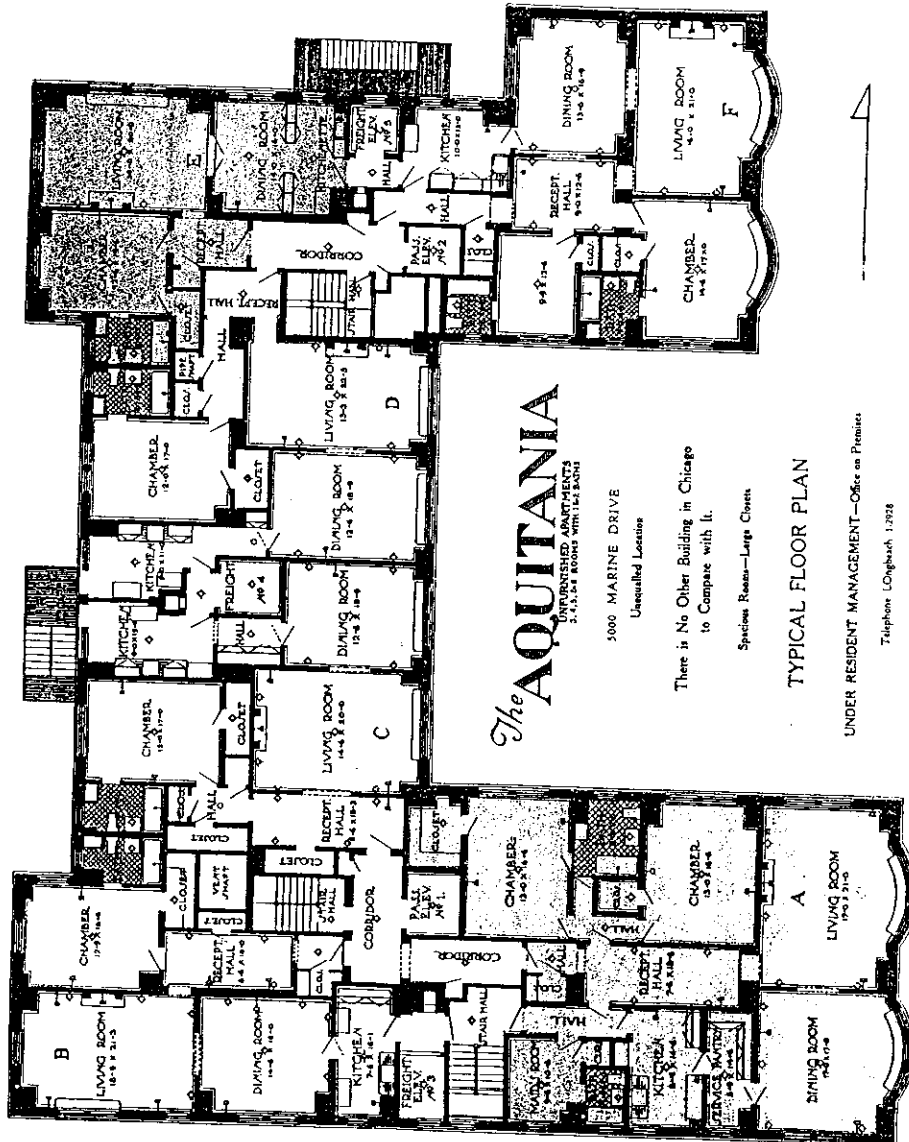


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201

203

205



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